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ABSTRACT

Two college faculty members have developed two speech communication courses specifically designed to increase the communication skills and self-confidence of non-native speakers of English. One course teaches pronunciation skills, including stress, rhythm, and intonation. The second focuses on speaking and listening skills for getting acquainted, conversation, group discussion, process description, story-telling, problem-solving, job interviewing, and planning meetings. Both include competency-based laboratory components and skill assessment. The laboratory takes place in the college speech communication center, a learning facility using peer tutoring. With the assistance of a grant, community volunteers consisting of older adults have been added to the center's staff. A pilot program confirmed planners' assumptions that (1) non-native students want access to native speakers of English but are apprehensive about seeking them out; (2) non-native students respect the opinions of older adults; (3) many older adults are skilled communicators of English; and (4) older adults provide a wider exposure to the American language and culture than do the non-native students' American peers. Planned program modifications include self-support, weekly brown-bag lunch meetings of instructors and volunteers, and discontinuance of skill assessment by volunteers owing to problems in providing training. Involving community volunteers has brought distinct advantages to the students, the college, and the volunteers themselves. (MSE)

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Involving Community Volunteers in a Competency-based Program to Teach Speaking, Listening and Pronounciation Skills to Non-native Speakers of English

Sharon A. Ratliffe and David D. Hudson

Each semester, Golden West College experiences an increase in the number of students who are non-native speakers of English. The majority of these students require the support of developmental courses in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in order to benefit from instruction. The English and Speech Communication Departments work cooperatively with the College Assessment Center in providing such services.

Specifically, the authors have developed two courses that are designed to increase communication skillfulness and self-confidence of non-native speakers of English: (1) SpCom 020 (Pronunciation Skills for Non-native Speakers of English) and (2) SpCom 025 (Speaking and Listening Skills). Both courses include competency-based laboratory components and skill assessment procedures. The laboratory takes place in the Golden West College Speech Communication Center, a competency-based learning facility that utilizes peer tutoring techniques. With the assistance of a grant from the College Educational Development Fund , community volunteers have been added to the Center staff to interact with students who are non-native speakers of English. Community volunteer programs exist

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Speech Communication Association (58th, Salt Lake City, UT Feb. 14-17, 1987)

See Apendix.

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throughout the country serving various educational needs (Gray, National School Volunteer Program). Our Community Volunteer Program was piloted Spring Semester, 1987, and will continue as a self-supporting program.

Description of the Program

Our Competency-based Approach

Competency-based approaches are designed to determine whether a student has achieved mastery of a behavior at a given criterion level. For us, this means: (1) skill objectives are stated behaviorally in terms of terminal performance to be achieved, (2) skills are evaluated on the basis of these behavioral objectives, and (3) the criteria for mastery are clearly specified before the student is evaluated. There are at least six important advantages to our competency-based approach to learning speaking, listening, and pronunciation skills. First, the approach provides an opportunity to individualize instruction by allowing students to learn communication skills at their own rate and to repeat skill demonstrtions as necessary. Second, this approach meets accountability needs by focusing students' efforts toward learning objectives rather than on competing with other classmates. Third, in contrast to the more traditional, norm-referenced procedures (i.e., the A through F grading system) which are designed to differentiate one student's performance of behavior from the performance of others, this competency-based approach makes no effort to compare students to each other. Fourth, when this approach is used across multiple sections of a course, it eliminates most of the

inconsistency that often exists among instructors. Fifth, this approach provides a possible means of pre- and post-assessment which can facilitate the placement of students at levels of instruction which match their abilities. And sixth, this approach provides a method for achieving a major goal of general education which is to assist students in thinking both logically and critically about themselves and the ways they interact with others.

The Courses for E. S. L. Students

SpCom 020 (Pronunciation Skills) includes 18 lessons for improving pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation. (Prator, 1985). This textbook is accompanied by audiotape practice exercises for each lesson which students utilize in the Center. Students are evaluated on four criteria: (1) class attendance, (2) eight written listening and pronunciation quizzes, (3) eight audiotape assignments that include their recitation of exercises from the textbook for instructor listening and oral feedback, and (4) the requirement of working in the Speech Communication Center at least one time each week for 15 weeks of the course. During Center visits, the students may (1) make tapes of their own speech for their audiotape assignments, (2) listen to tapes that coincide with the lessons in their textbook and practice their pronunciation accordingly, and/or (3) meet with native speakers of English who are either student tutors or community volunteers that staff the Center for the purpose of having conversations in which they receive

feedback about their pronunciation.

SpCom 025 includes eight units of study and eight speaking and eight listening skill demonstrations, for a total of 16 separate assessments (Ratliffe and Hudson, In progress):

Unit One: Getting Acquainted Skills

Skill 1: Stating and responding to personal communcation goals

Unit Two: Conversation Skills

Skill 2: Initiating and managing a conversation

Unit Three: Group Discussion Skills

Skill 3: Stating and responding to opinion statements

Unit Four: Process Description Skills

Skill 4: Explaining and responding to a process description

Unit Five: Story-telling Skills

Skill 5: Describing and responding to a factual story

Unit Six: Problem-Solving Skills

Skill 6: Initiating and responding in a problem-solving discussion

Unit Seven: Job Interviewing Skills

Skill 7: Initiating and responding in a job interview

Unit Eight: Planning Meeting Skills

Skill 8: Expressing and responding to feeling statements

Students may go to the Center as often as necessary in order to demonstrate a level of mastery on each skill.

SpCom 025 students are evaluated in the class on the basis

of five criteria: (1) attendance, (2) completion of the 16 speaking and listening assessments, (3) submission of eight written homework assignments [one for each unit], (4) submission of eight audiotape demonstrations of the speaking and listening skill that pertain to each unit, and (5) the completion of nine classroom oral assignments that coincide with the units of study. These assignments include:

1. Self-introduction
2. Conversation to get and give information (including a list of questions to be asked)
3. Learning group discussion of cultural similarities and differences (including notecard outlines)
4. Demonstration talk to the class (including sentence outline)
5. Group problem-solving discussion (including discussion outline)
6. Talk to take a stand (including sentence outline)
7. Description of a factual story (including content outline)
8. Job interview (including resume)
9. Program proposal

As is true in all of our Speech Communication courses, students in these courses are pre-assessed and post-assessed for communication apprehension and pre-assessed for critical listening skills. SpCom 011 (Listening Lab) provides students with an open-entry/open-exit course that is based on a self-paced program to improve critical listening. (Sartain, 1975). SpCom 012 (Communication Confidence Lab) provides students with a six week course designed to promote the reduction of communication anxiety as meansured by the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension -24 (McCroskey, 1982; Richmond and McCroskey, 1985). Six week sessions of this lab earn a half credit and are offerred each semester.

Students are recommended to SpCom 020 and 025 by the English

Department and by Speech Communication instructors. Both departments recommend that students eligible for English 003 (Sentence Writing) enroll concurrently in SpCom 020. Students enrolled in English 004 (Writing Paragraphs) are recommended to enroll concurrently in SpCom 025.

The Speech Communication Center

Each semester, the Center serves approximately 800 to 1,000 students in all Speech Communication classes by conducting over 6,600 10-12 minute assessments of their skill demonstrations in various courses. A staff of 12 to 20 student tutors conduct the assessments. Presently students provide the staff for the Center in one of two ways:

1. The majority of the staff members are students currently enrolled in a 3 credit course, SpCom 240 (Tutoring Communication). These students have completed SpCom 100 (Interpersonal Communication) with a grade of "A" or "B." (Ratliffe and Hudson, 1987).
2. The Center staff is supplemented by paid student assistants who have completed SpCom 240 (Tutoring Communication) with a grade of "A."

In an effort to broaden both the range of services and the time available to the approximately 120 students enrolled in SpCom 020 and 025, the authors conducted a pilot study to involve community volunteers as supplemental Speech Communication Center staff for the purpose of assisting non-native speakers of English in their laboratory assignments.

During the Spring Semester, 1987, the students enrolled in

SpCom 020 and 025 made 30 minute appointments with community volunteers either to practice their pronunciation skills (SpCom 020) or to demonstrate the 16 speaking and listening skills (SpCom 025). In addition, they came in to have conversations for such purposes as inquiring about American idioms or requesting assistance with vocabulary.

The community volunteers were older adults who have lived in the American culture and whose first language usually is English. This past semester, twelve community volunteers staff the Center weekly for a total of 28 hours from Monday through Friday. Our volunteers came to us from two sources. They were members of the Golden West College Patrons, a group that participates in volunteers projects on campus in exchange for pay that they donate to the scholorship fund. Other volunteers were referred by the Orange County West Volunteer Center, a United Way Agency.

Conclusions from the Pilot Study

We involved community volunteers on the assumptions that (1) non-native students want access to native speakers of English but are apprehensive about seeking such involvement on their own, (2) non-native students tend to respect the opinions of older adults, (3) many older adults are skilled communicators of English, (4) community volunteers often tend to be retired teachers who are eager to contribute to and associate with learners, and (4) older adults provide a wider exposure for non-native students to the American language and culture than do their peers.

These assumptions have proven to be accurate. However,

based on the experience of the pilot study, these modifications will be made in the program for the Fall Semester:

1. The G.W.C. Patrons have offerred to continue their support of the program with no additional request for funds.
2. The instructors instituted a weekly "Brown Bag Lunch" on Wednesdays midway through the semester to exchange ideas regarding current lessons. These meetings provided a forum for instructors and volunteers to educate each other about how to meet students needs more effectively. These weekly meetings will become a regular part of the program.
3. Many volunteers expressed a reluctance to function as assessors of the 16 skill competencies for SpCom 025 students without specific training on each skill. Since volunteers worked at different hours, the instructors would need to provide separate training sessions every other week for each volunteer. Because of this time commitment, the skill assessment function for SpCom 025 students will be transferred out of the Community Volunteer Program and reinstituted as a function of the student peer assessors enrolled in SpCom 240 or paid student assistants who are trained to assess each SpCom 025 skill as part of their responsibilities. SpCom 025 students will be given weekly communication assignments to complete with the community volunteers.

There are several advantages that we have found from involving community volunteers in the Speech Communication Center Center to work with non-native speakers of English: (1) Both volunteers and students have an opportunity to increase their personal effectiveness in using the communication skills. (2) Students have the advantage of a one-to-one demonstration and evaluation of their speaking, listening, and pronunciation skills. (3) Volunteers and students students report a high level of satisfaction in working with each other (4) Students are enthusiastic about taking additional Speech Communication courses. (5) Preliminary data suggests that students' levels of communication apprehension decreases as indicated by their scores on the P.R.C.A. survey instrument. (6) Through the involvement of community volunteers and college financial support of this pilot study, non-native students will continue to be provided opportunities for skill practice and individual consultation in the future no additional costs to the Center or the College.

Sharon A. Ratliffe (Ph.D., Wayne State University, 1973) and David D. Hudson (Ph.D., University of Denver, 1979) are Instructors of Speech Communication, Golden West College, Huntington Beach, CA 92647.

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APPENDIX

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APPLICATION
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

NAME OF PROJECT - Pilot Project involving senior citizens working with E.S.L. students in the Speech Communication Center.

NAME OF PARTICIPANTS - Dr. David Hudson and Dr. Sharon Ratliffe

TYPE OF PROJECT -

Instructional improvement	_X	In-service education	__
Media development	__	Course development	__
Revise materials	__	Other_____	

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

Our Speech 020 and 025 courses are developmental courses on speaking and listening for ESL students. Students report that they feel apprehensive about talking with native speakers of English. Course evaluations show that students improve their self-confidence and their skillfulness in communicating increases when they can work with staff of the Speech Communication Center. The problem arises because the Center does not have staff available to provide additional time for informal conversations with ESL students.

The objective of this project is to pilot test the feasibility of using senior citizen volunteers to provide the extra communication opportunities needed for these developmental students.

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT IMPROVE THE TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS?

Supplementing the Speech Communication Center staff with the addition of retired, older adults will increase the opportunities for ESL students to speak English. We believe that student learning will be enhanced by this because (1) ESL students tend to respect the opinion of older adults, (2) many older adults are skilled communicators, eager to contribute and to be around young people, and (3) older adults provide broader exposure for ESL students to the American language and culture.

Date recieved - September 26, 1986
Proposed stard date - October 15, 1986
Anticipated completion date - June 1, 1987

PROPOSED BUDGET

SUPPLIES

Development of brochure to advertise the program to senior citizen groups	$300.00

PERSONNEL

Faculty developers to design brochure, establish training sessions for the volunteers and set up appointment system for students. 10 days per deim (5 days each)	$1554.60

OTHER COST ITEMS

Hourly pay for the pilot group of seniors who will be trained.	$1000.00
TOTAL BUDGET	$2854.60

AGREED TO BY _____

_____
(Proposers)

APPROVALS: _____(Educ. Dev.)

_____(Inst. Dean)

_____(President)

_____
(date)

NOTATIONS:

The GWC Patrons Circle may be cooperating in this project. Decision date will shortly follow the October 10th Patron's luncheon meeting. Seniors from that group who work as volunteers will be donating the money they "earn" in the project back to the college for the scholarship program.